



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Issue 102 – April 3, 2006

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Last week I was honored to join Tucson Mayor Bob Walkup and the Metropolitan Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau, along with a delegation of 40 business leaders, in opening the new tourism office in Hermosillo, Sonora. Jonathan Walker and his team at the Tucson CVB have made an incredible commitment to the Mexico market and the opening of this office was truly a landmark day for Arizona. Mexico continues to be Arizona's number one international market and it is because of the efforts of organizations such as the Tucson CVB that we can continue to develop and grow this valuable market. As Arizona's border state, Sonora is truly a land of opportunity and the daily presence of an Arizona office in Hermosillo will assist in facilitating visitation throughout the entire Grand Canyon State.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

TEAM FY 07 Grant Application Deadline

Fiscal Year 2007 TEAM Grant applications are due on April 7, 2006. One signed original and four copies must be mailed to AOT and delivered no later than 5:00 p.m. Friday, April 7, 2006. Applications may also be hand delivered to the address noted below on or before 5:00 p.m. Friday, April, 7, 2006. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

TEAM Program
Arizona Office of Tourism
1110 West Washington, Suite 155
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Calling All Addresses!

The Arizona Office of Tourism will be releasing a new printed communications newsletter to help disseminate quarterly research data, AOT news and information and valuable industry updates. *Crossroads* will be distributed in early April, and AOT is currently updating its database with physical addresses. To help us get the news to you, please send your address updates to Loretta Belonio at lbelonio@azot.gov. For more information about the newsletter, please contact Michelle Thompson at (602) 364-3724 or mthompson@azot.gov.

AOT Posts 2005 4th Quarter Newsletter

The 4th Quarter Newsletter is now available on the Research section of www.azot.com. The newsletter contains 4th quarter 2005 indicators for lodging, air passenger traffic, tourism related tax revenues, State and National Park visitation and visitor counts from Painted Cliffs Welcome Center. The newsletter also includes 2005 year-end figures for lodging, tourism related tax revenues and air passenger traffic. For more information, contact Audra Beyer, Research Manager, at (602) 364-3716 or abeyer@azot.gov.

Make the Visitors' First Impression a Grand One!

The Arizona Office of Tourism is pleased to announce the FY 06 Grand Impressions workshops series. These workshops are a full day of education and training designed to empower tourism professionals by offering a Customer Service Training Program featuring: "How to Host International Visitors," a presentation on Arizona tourism attractions, and a mini-familiarization tour of an attraction in the workshop host's area, designed to provide first-hand knowledge of exciting Arizona destinations. The workshops are offered free of charge to travel counselors and hospitality professionals

across the state. All workshops will be held from 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Below is a list of the Grand Impressions workshops for this year:

Bullhead City	April 13, 2006
Holbrook	April 27, 2006
Payson	April 28, 2006
Mesa	May 5, 2006
Sierra Vista	May 12, 2006

Space is limited! To register, please contact Sarah Martins, Travel Counselor at the Arizona Office of Tourism, at (602) 364-3687 or smartins@azot.gov.

Last Chance to Submit Nominations of Area Attractions!

As part of a project with National Geographic, the Arizona Office of Tourism and the Sonora Office of Tourism are asking locals to nominate special areas from the Greater Phoenix Metro area through Southern Arizona and Sonora that are geographically, culturally and historically unique. A map detailing the areas included can be found at www.ArizonaGeotourism.com. This project, called the Geotourism MapGuide, will increase knowledge about sustainable tourism and destination stewardship. Geotourism is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographic character of a place - its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents. Candidates might nominate a national park, museum or historic site, but might also include a private enterprise, such a family-owned restaurant serving cuisine indicative of the border region's heritage, a historic hotel or community-run craft center. The benefit to local communities is tourist revenue that can help restore historic districts, support local craftspeople, preserve and develop local cuisine and retain cultural traditions that would otherwise disappear.

Nominations will be taken through next Monday, April 10, 2006. To nominate a site, visit www.ArizonaGeotourism.com. Nomination forms can be downloaded and e-mailed to joaquin@sonoran.org or submitted directly to the Sonoran Institute at: Sonoran Institute, Main Office, Attn: Joaquin Murrieta-Saldivar, 7650 E. Broadway, Suite 203, Tucson, AZ 85710. Additional documentation such as maps, photos or brochures is welcome and can be mailed to the above address. For more information about the project, please contact Marci Elizondo at the Arizona Office of Tourism at (602) 364-3720 or melizondo@azot.gov.

Trippin' With AOT

Arizona Well Represented at ITB Berlin 2006

Mary Rittmann and Hylton Fothergill from AOT's Travel Industry Marketing division and Jacki Mieler with AOT's Media Relations Division attended Internationale Tourismus Boerse (ITB) held March 8 – 12, 2006 in Berlin, Germany. ITB is the largest travel trade show in the world, attracting nearly 10,500 exhibitors from 181 countries and

60,000 travel industry professionals. AOT staff members were joined by representatives from the Greater Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tucson and Flagstaff Convention and Visitors Bureaus; the Best Western Grand Canyon Squire Inn; the Westin Kierland Resort; Carefree Resort and Villas; and Sheraton Wild Horse Pass. There were 33 pre-scheduled appointments in which information was gathered, compiled and shared by all delegates, resulting in 18 leads, 27 marketing opportunities and 13 requests for promotional materials. To obtain a copy of the report, please contact Kristy McKinnon at (602) 364-3696 or kmckinnon@azot.gov.

National Tour Association (NTA) Spring Meet Wrap Up

Jennifer Sutcliffe, Travel Industry Marketing Manager at AOT, attended the NTA Spring Meet in Louisville, KY March 22 – 25. Spring Meet is an annual educational and partnering conference specifically designed for tour operators. About 300 people attend the spring event. AOT co-sponsors an evening event with the Scottsdale CVB, which allows us to attend the four-day event for networking and educational opportunities to which few suppliers have access. Twenty-five people attended this highly anticipated reception and dinner – including past presidents, board members and key NTA staff. For more information, please contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at jsutcliffe@azot.gov.

Tourism – Caring for America Project Helps Rebuild the Katrina-Battered Mississippi Gulf Coast

On March 16-29, Jennifer Sutcliffe, Travel Industry Marketing Manager at AOT, participated in the Tourism – Caring for America event. Providing hope and 5,000 hours of hard labor, more than 330 members of the tourism industry descended upon the hurricane-ravaged Mississippi Gulf Coast last weekend in an effort to help ameliorate the communities of Biloxi, Gulfport, D'Iberville and Pass Christian. Brought together under the auspices of Tourism Cares for Tomorrow, a public charity of the tourism industry, volunteers spent two full days working at culturally significant coastal sites and departed with an increased sense of responsibility for the area. Tourism Cares for Tomorrow is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of worldwide tourism sites, and this was its biggest effort to date, allowing tourism industry professionals and students to “give back” to a community that had been a thriving tourism destination. For more information, click [here](#) or contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at (602) 364-3693 or jsutcliffe@azot.gov.

Industry News

Travel Exhibits Strong Growth Globally and to U.S.

Travel and tourism generated \$6 trillion in economic activity globally in 2005, up 5.7 percent over the prior year, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council and Accenture. Somewhat slower growth of 4.6 percent is expected in 2006 as this rises to \$6.5 trillion. Travel and tourism is expected to represent 3.6 percent of total global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2006, and 10.3 percent if including tourism-related

businesses (e.g. catering, cleaning). And the industry will create 2.5 million new jobs worldwide this year, comprising a total of 76.7 million jobs, or 2.8 percent of global employment. The 10-year annualized real growth (2007-2016) forecast is 4.2 percent a year. Total worldwide travel and tourism economic activity is forecasted to total \$12.1 trillion in 2016. (TIA TravelCom Report, 3/24)

Air Fares Decline while Other Costs Rise

A new American Express Business Travel Monitor shows that booked domestic airfares hit a six-year low in 2005, while international airfares, hotel and rental car rates all reached six-year highs. Domestic one-way airfares averaged \$216 following years of downward trending since 2000. Many in the industry, however, expect domestic fares to rise this year. International one-way air fares increased 7 percent to average \$1,666. In light of stronger pricing power on such routes, airlines in the past year have bolstered long-haul international service to take advantage up increased demand according to BTN. Meanwhile, increased travel coupled with a stagnant hotel supply has given hoteliers the leverage to raise room rates which rose to \$137 in 2005 – the highest rate since 2001. Internationally, booked rates have increased even more to \$212, up \$15 over 2004. Car rental costs rose 2 percent to a six-year high averaging \$66 a day. (Source: btnOnline.com)

Travel Web Sites Developments

ESPN and Orbitz have teamed up to create ESPN Sports Travel, a booking and travel information website for sports fans. The website allows users to book flights and hotels through Orbitz without leaving the ESPN.com site. In addition to schedules, statistics and sports news, the site includes a trip-planner with dates and destinations for all types of sporting events. It also offers guides to 16 cities, with another 34 to be added in the coming weeks. (Source: USA Today)

EU Launches Tourism Web Site

The European Union is launching a new strategy to lure tourists to the continent as it faces competition from other parts of the globe. The EU aims to coordinate and package its 25-member nations as a single attraction through a new "Visit Europe" Web site, www.visiteurope.com. The site, which is funded by the European Commission, provides a one-stop site with practical information on such things as transport, weather and events across Europe. The site is currently focused on travelers from the U.S., Canada and Brazil and is run by the separate European Travel Commission, which represents national tourist boards across Europe. The plan still needs the backing of EU governments. Tourists from the U.S. and Canada accounted for 5.4 percent of visitors in Europe, the highest number from non-European nations. (Page D5, Wall Street Journal)

Scottsdale Garners Awards for Top Chefs

Mary Elaine's at The Phoenician garnered two of the recently announced nominations for the prestigious James Beard Awards for 2006. Chef de Cuisine Bradford Thompson is nominated for best chef in the region. The awards honor chefs, restaurants, wine programs, cookbooks, broadcasting, print journalism and restaurant design across 62 categories. Thompson is nominated as one of five for "Best Chef: Southwest," recognizing those who have set new or consistent standards of excellence in his or her region. Honorees must have been a working chef for the past five years and the three most recent years spent in the region for which they are nominated. Also nominated for "Best Chef: Southwest" is Nobuo Fukuda of Sea Saw in Scottsdale, Ariz. (Press Release, 3/24)

Official Tourism Sites Command Attention

More than half, or 55 percent, of respondents in a consumer survey who visited 11 official tourism destination Web sites later visited the destinations. They spent an estimated \$9 billion collectively on lodging, dining, shopping, entertainment and transportation, according to USDAM. USDAM, an interactive marketing agency for the travel industry, said an estimated \$7 billion in additional revenues may come from these visitors in 2006. Said Leah Woolford, CEO of USDAM: "These high conversion rates and strong economic impact figures indicate how effective these official local tourism offices are at delivering the destination information that motivates consumers to visit." These sites can effectively compete against the multi-million dollar advertising budgets of the large travel Web sites, she added. The 2005 Tourism Economic Impact Report included feedback from more than 54,000 survey participants. The survey showed all 11 sites had high conversion rates above 40 percent. (TravelMole, 3/30)

Cooking Up a Vacation

Fine dining has long been a critical aspect of travel. Americans spent \$131 billion on food while traveling domestically in 2004, more than they did on lodging, according to the Travel Industry Association. But these days vacationers are looking for more than just a good meal. They want to learn about their food's ingredients, understand how it's made, and even participate in the preparation. Hotels, restaurants and cruise lines are responding with innovative programs that offer food enthusiasts unique culinary experiences. From diving for a lobster to cooking alongside a favorite chef, the offerings go beyond conventional cooking classes. (Page 114, Business Week, 4/3)

Travelers Heading for Warmer Weather

Wealthy Americans this year are heading for the same places as less well-heeled travelers: bluer skies and warmer weather. Florida, Arizona and the Dominican Republic have grabbed the most attention so far this year, says Small Luxury Hotels of the World. The top three most popular properties this winter were within the US, but the recently built Sivory Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic is also topping lists. (TravelMole, 3/30)

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